

25 Ways to Build Your Sports Program
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The successful programs all share common traits. Having traveled this great country, I've had the wonderful opportunity to dialog with and discover what the great coaches are doing. Here are some of the common items that the winning programs possess. Our state is very fortunate to have so many wonderful coaches, who go that extra mile. These coaches aren't just winning, they are developing the community, state, and national leaders of tomorrow. I dedicate this article to those amazing and caring coaches of this great state and to the Paralympic Athletes who I represented the United States at the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens, Greece, last September.

- 1. Develop a philosophy that you believe in. Communicate your philosophy and the philosophy of your program to all parties involved. Have a Vision and Mission Statement. Communicating your philosophy is essential to the success of your program. Does your program teach, VISION, FOCUS, DISCIPLINE, and PERSISTENCE AND COMMITMENT?*
- 2. Do your best to hire assistants who enjoy being with student/athletes. Be sure your assistants share your philosophy. Knowledge will come. Don't micromanage your assistants. If you hire them, then delegate, trust, and support them.*
- 3. Encourage your coaches to attend clinics and coaching education programs. "When you are through learning, you are through!"*
- 4. Have a list of guidelines for your student/athletes and parents to sign. If your administration won't back one of your guidelines, don't have that guideline. It's critical that your administration back you in all areas you ask everyone to sign. . Your guidelines will reflect your philosophy.*
- 5. Have a pre-season gathering of your parents and student/athletes to discuss expectations for your program. Call it, "Night of Champions!"*
- 6. Give your meet/game results to all your faculty members. Keep the school staff involved and engaged in your program.*
- 7. Have a "THEME for the year. Have the theme reflect a life lesson(s) you are attempting to teach your student/athletes through your sport.*

8. *Encourage your athletes to dress up on competition days. “Dress the way you want to be.”*
9. *Sell your program to your community and to the media. Educate them in your sport. Some in the community and media may not completely understand all the nuisances of your sport.*
10. *Share your practice plans/game plans with your student/athletes. Engage them in the process. Empower them in decision-making.*
11. *Emphasize the importance of warming up and down each day. Warming up is important, but so is warming down. It’s tough to win with injured athletes.*
12. *Don’t rip your athletes for losing. Ask questions. Some athletes are afraid of winning and some are afraid of losing. No one wakes up planning and hoping to lose. Would you prepare your math class for a test, then stand up and scream at them during the test. Would you allow the parents to stop by on math test day and scream at their sons or daughters during the test.. You wouldn’t allow that. Practice and games should be no different. Prepare, then execute!*
13. *Don’t be afraid to say, “I made a mistake!” Like athletes, you want them to admit their mistake, learn from it and just move on.*
14. *Outline responsibilities of all parties involved in your program, including your parents. Often times responsibilities can become confused.*
15. *Seek out the help of other great coaches. Get a mentor and also mentor someone. This state is full of great coaches.*
16. *Emphasize the importance of off-season training. Also emphasize the importance of multi-sport athletes. Nothing has done more damage to the modern high school athlete, than the single-sport athlete.*
17. *Have athletes of the week and academic athletes of the week. Reward athletic and academic excellence. Drive home the message that academics are very important. You can be an academic and athletic school. Don’t settle for anything less.*
18. *Teach your student/athletes to write both outcome and performance goals. Performance goals are often overlooked. Performance goals are things your athletes do on a daily basis. Outcome goal are what you want to accomplish in the end, like winning a state title.*

19. *Have potential athletes apply for their captain positions. Being a captain is an honor. "With rights come responsibilities." The selected captains need to understand that.*
20. *Test and diagnose your athletes. Call on your physical education department for testing results, as you evaluate current athletes and prospective athletes. (30 meter fly, standing long jump, standing triple jump, vertical jump tests)*
21. *Create a website for your team. It's time to join the information super-highway to disseminate information.*
22. *Use your sport to teach good character traits. Honesty, integrity, humor, altruism, friendship, etc... Community tax dollars are being spent on your program. Show the community you want to win, but your program is more than just a win loss-machine. Show them their tax dollars are developing the leaders of tomorrow, through sport. In tough economic times, if the community sees no value in your program, it will be cut!*
23. *Don't overanalyze your athletes. Sometimes the best advice is no advice.*
24. *Help your junior high and middle school programs. Have your high school student-athletes run mini-camps. There is no better way to learn something, than to have to teach it.*
25. *Study winners. Study why they win, how they win, and what characteristics their programs have.*